Scholastic

Grades 5 and up

50 Debate Prompts for Kids

Reproducible Debate Sheets Complete With Background and Pro/Con Points That Get Kids Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Thinking About the Topics That Spark Their Interest

by Patrick Daley and Michael S. Dahlie



SCHOLASTIC

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SCHOLASTIC
PROFESSIONAL BOOKS

New York Toronto London Auckland Sydney
Mexico City New Delhi Hong Kong

Many of the debates in this book have been adapted from *Scholastic Action* and *Scholastic Scope*. If you would like to order class subscriptions to these magazines, call 1-800-724-6527.

Cover design by Josué Castilleja
Cover illustration by Stacey Schuett
Interior design by Daryl Hair

ISBN 0-439-05179-7

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Ready, Read, Debate!

Debating teaches students how to investigate new ideas and develop critical thinking skills, and opens their minds to different viewpoints.

Using Debates in the Classroom

Once considered the stuff of elite high schools, debates are finding their way into classrooms at all grade levels. And for good reason. The debating process teaches students how to investigate new ideas, helps them develop critical thinking skills, and opens their minds to different viewpoints.

Basically, when working with students, there are five steps to the debating process that you will want to reinforce and model. Those steps are as follows:

Gather	Gather information
↓	
Explore	Explore all sides of an issue
↓	
Form	Form an initial opinion
↓	
Defend	Defend the position in a debate
↓	
Refine	Refine opinion through knowledge gained in the debate

Not an Argument

Unfortunately, many of us confuse debating with arguing. And no wonder! Our most public displays of debate—political debates—are rarely an exchange of ideas for the purpose of refining one's thinking. Ideally, debating is an open-minded, intelligent way to explore a world filled with diverse viewpoints.

In the classroom, you can best instruct about this type of debate by regularly modeling it, making sure to demonstrate your willingness to change your opinions as you gather new information. For a simple debate exercise, you can complete the five-step process in minutes. A more elaborate or complex debate may extend for weeks.

The Reading Connection

Of course in this book you will find many debates which will spark new ideas and challenge existing viewpoints. But before you even consult the pages in this book, you can help students better prepare for debating just by turning to the books they are reading . . . or have read long ago.

As a warm-up, bring out the children's classic, *Make Way for Ducklings*. (Yes, even your sophisticated middle-schoolers will see the debating value of this picture book when you are finished.) Read the book aloud to students to refresh their memory of the tale. Then introduce the debate question, "Should Mike have stopped the traffic to let the ducklings cross the street?"

Instead of having students immediately vote yes or no, focus on exploring the different sides of this question. (NOTE: It is extremely important for you to show that you are always more interested in the process of forming an opinion than you are in the opinion itself.) Why might someone say that Mike was right? Why might others think he was wrong? Have students revisit the story to seek further information and clarification. Were there stop signs or traffic lights on the street? How fast were the cars going? Were there, in fact, many cars on the street?

Point out to students that they can look to most of the books they are reading independently for good debate questions. And by the middle grades, students are capable of taking each step to a deeper level.

Use as an example the book *Spirit Quest* by Susan Sharpe. In this book, a young Native American boy discovers more about his rich ancestry. Within the book there are tons of debatable issues. But a real-world debate topic (which is found later in this book) is "Should sports teams drop Native American names?" This debate takes on a whole new significance when viewed through the eyes of William—the protagonist in *Spirit Quest*.

Just Imagine

Critical thinking, thoughtful discussion, and informed, flexible opinions. What a great process to teach students. What a great literacy skill to give our future community leaders!

Using This Book

There are many ways that you can use the debates in this book. Students can read them independently, or you can use them for a whole-class discussion or as shared reading. Here are a few suggestions:

Whole-Class Discussion

You may simply pass out a debate and ask students to read the debate issue—both sides—and then discuss in class. However, for a richer experience you may want to preview the debate topic by just reading the title aloud. Then students can fill out the first part of the Before and After graphic organizer found on page 13. This will allow students to see how their opinion might change as they gather more information.

Shared Reading

Remember that you, the teacher, are the most valuable resource for modeling how one goes about forming an opinion. To best do this, pass out a copy of a debate to each student. As you read the debate to the students, use several "think alouds" to show how your opinion is forming. Interjecting comments such as "Oh, I never thought of that." Or "That's something I never thought of before." This shows that you are an active, engaged reader.

Independent and/or Paired Reading

There are times when you may want your students to work on the debates independently. This option allows students to practice their opinion-forming skills and strategies from time to time. In paired readings students can work together (in pairs) to help each other through the opinion-forming process. In either case, you may wish to have them express their points of view in one or more of the following ways:

- Discussion: Tell students to be prepared to share their opinion about the topic.
- Writing: Debates naturally act as prompts for students to craft a written point of view. Encourage students to clearly identify the reasons that have helped them form their own opinion.
- Consider Other Viewpoints: A higher-order thinking response occurs when students state the opinion of someone else—not their own. For example, encourage students to think about what the opinion of the concert organizer might be regarding moshing, or what the emergency room doctor's opinion might be regarding the mandatory skateboard helmet laws.
- Finding More Information: Some debates will naturally lend themselves to further research. Assign some debate topics with this task in mind.

Using Debates to Build Vocabulary

Use this grid to pre-teach difficult words or to follow up on difficult words after the debate has been discussed in class. You may also want to assign these words in conjunction with the Learning New Words graphic organizer found on page 12.

Debate Prompt	Vocabulary Words	Definition
1. Should animals be used to test new products?	advocate (n.) ethical vaccine	someone who strongly supports a cause believing in and sticking to a value system of right and wrong a medicine that protects people from disease
2. Should cell phones and beepers be allowed in class?	ban communicate device (n.)	to not allow something to express one's thoughts through talking, writing, etc. a machine or piece of equipment designed for a specific purpose
3. In disasters like the sinking of the *Titanic*, who should be saved first?	indestructible survive voyage	something that cannot be destroyed to live through a dangerous event a long journey, typically over a sea or ocean
4. Should beaches have rules?	dominate injure ruin	to control by force to hurt oneself or another to destroy or spoil
5. Should people be allowed to go barefoot anywhere they want?	promote sole violate	to spread the word; to encourage others to join in the underside of the foot to break or disregard
6. Should gun makers pay the cost of gun violence?	misuse sue violence	to use incorrectly to use legal means to take action against another person or company acts that are physically harmful
7. Should people lose their jobs if it helps the environment?	consequence environment extinct	the result of an action the land, air, and water within a given area when all of a particular type of animal or plant dies out
8. Should children be allowed to enter beauty pageants?	contestant organizer participate	a person who takes part in a contest a person who runs or manages a group to take part in
9. Should student athletes have to get good grades to play sports?	coast despite struggle	to make it through a situation with little trouble regardless of to have trouble completing a task or goal
10. Should coats made with dog fur be against the law?	companion coyote loyal	a friend a kind of wild dog that lives in the woods to stay true or faithful to someone or something
11. Should boxing be banned?	endurance paralysis spectacular	the ability to make it through stressful situations—either mental or physical the loss of the ability to move or feel part or all of one's body fascinating and captivating

Debate Prompt	Vocabulary Words	Definition
12. Do police belong in schools?	beat (n.) controversy rowdy	the area a police officer is responsible for an argument or dispute wild behavior
13. Should hunting be banned as a sport?	endangered inhumane tradition	on its way to becoming extinct cruel and brutal something that is handed down from one generation to the next
14. Should students get paid for attending school?	dedication motivation sweatshops	willingness to spend time and energy on a given project the reason or reasons that cause you to do something factories where workers are treated inhumanely
15. If you do the crime, should your parents do the time?	contribute partially sentenced	to add to in part, not completely ordered by a judge to serve jail time or community service
16. Should teen criminals be locked up in adult prisons?	commit increase reform	to do; to take part in to make greater, to make more likely to happen to change for the better
17. Should you change the way you dress because of what other people might think?	conference conform shallow	a meeting to try to fit into accepted standards lacking depth; superficial
18. Should businesses be forced to deliver to every neighborhood?	crave discriminate illegal	to have a strong desire for to treat someone unfairly based on unrelated factors against the law
19. Should the government rate music?	censor regulate suitable	to block out to control appropriate; correct for the situation
20. Are teen juries a good idea?	accused (n.) jury box justice	defendant in a legal case the area where jurors sit during a trial the system of laws in a community
21. Is space exploration worth the money we spend on it?	astronaut explore NASA	a person who travels in outer space to investigate National Aeronautics and Space Administration
22. If you find $100, is it yours to keep?	convinced decent wad	believed strongly good a stack; a bundle
23. Some malls in America have banned teens. Is this fair?	accompany intimidate privilege	to go with to scare honor
24. If you see someone cheating on a test, should you tell?	benefit (v.) betray consider	to receive help from to be disloyal to think about

Debate Prompt	Vocabulary Words	Definition
25. Are teen curfews a good thing?	cruise focus institute (v.)	to roam around to concentrate on to put into place
26. Is year-round school a good idea?	alternate (v.) boost session	to take turns to improve period when schools are open
27. Should skateboarding be banned in public places?	disrupt necessary pedestrians	to interrupt needed people who travel on foot
28. Should Olympic athletes be tested for drugs?	establish random sacrifice	to put into place to not follow a pattern to give up something you really want
29. Should sports teams drop Native American names?	enthusiastic offensive uphold	to be very excited about insulting to maintain
30. Should celebrities be responsible for the products they endorse?	decision endorse exploit	a judgment or conclusion to promote to take advantage of
31. Should schools have dress codes?	dilemma hinder mandatory	a choice between two equal options to prevent required
32. Should celebrities speak out on political issues?	influence obliged take a stand	to effect required by a sense of duty to express an opinion in a public format
33. Should kids have to address teachers as Ma'am and Sir?	counteract formal instill	to work against proper to bring about
34. Should laws be stricter for teenage drivers?	gradually restrict transport	slowly to limit to carry from one location to another
35. Should the paparazzi be banned?	aggressive annoying aspect	strong-willed something or someone that bothers or disturbs one feature of a given situation
36. Do teens have too much to do?	priority shelter sufficient	something that is more important than other things to protect enough
37. If you find a historical treasure, does it belong to you?	artifact debt sunken	an object of historical interest money owed dropped to the bottom of the ocean or other body of water

Debate Prompt	Vocabulary Words	Definition
38. Should surveillance cameras be used in schools?	install reduce surveillance	to put in place to lower to watch carefully over a wide area
39. Should moshing be allowed at concerts?	common packed risky	to occur often filled to capacity potentially dangerous
40. Should school news-papers be censored?	conclusive inconsistent supervise	provides information that allows a conclusion to be made to not follow along; to be contrary to to oversee
41. Should paddling be used to punish stu-dents?	esteem estimate severe	to respect and admire to approximate based on given information harsh
42. Would you give up certain luxuries to save the environ-ment?	continuously pessimistic recycle	without interruption negative use again
43. Should students have to do volunteer work to graduate?	compassion involve require	feelings of sympathy to take part in to make necessary
44. Should schools named for slave owners be renamed?	deserve honor surgeon	to earn something to respect a doctor who performs operations in a hospital
45. Should doctors transplant pigs' organs into human bodies?	compatible function temporarily	to work well with something or someone to work properly for a short time
46. Should male and female training in the military be separate?	appoint exclude propose	to name someone to a position or group to keep separate to suggest
47. Should girls have their own schools?	impression opponent opportunity	a taste of; a suggestion someone on the opposite side or team in a debate or argument a chance to do something
48. Should kids learn riflery in schools?	bear (v.) beef up mixed message	to carry something to strengthen; to improve a message with two or more conflicting points
49. Should the United States be the world's police force?	abandon horrifying unthinkable	to leave or give up on someone or something completely frightening out of the realm of possibility
50. Should teens have their own credit cards?	consumer convenience replace	a person who buys things ease of use to get another

Name ______________________________ **Date** ______________

Learning New Words

You may come across some new words as you read this debate. Put each new word in the graphic organizer below and fill in the information for each word. (Be sure to include all words you see in boldface type.)

Debate Topic:

Word	Sentence	My Definition

Name ____________________ **Date** __________

Before and After

Sometimes people change their minds—or opinions. Does this ever happen to you, too? Use the graphic organizer below to keep track of how your opinion either changes or stays the same. Here's what you do:

1. Read the Debate Topic title. Then fill in *Part 1: Before*.
2. When you have finished reading the debate, fill in *Part 2: After*.
3. In *Part 3: Tell Why*, explain your thinking.

Debate Topic:

Part 1: Before	Before reading this debate, these are my thoughts and opinions about the topic:

____

____

____

____

Part 2: After	After reading this debate, this is how my opinion has gotten stronger:

____

____

____

____

Part 3: Tell Why	After reading this debate, this is how my opinion has changed:

____

____

____

____

Name ______________________ **Date** __________

Looking at Both Sides

In most debate issues, you will see reasons for or against the topic. As you read the debate, keep track of both sides by filling in the graphic organizer below.

Debate Topic:

For/Yes	Against/No

Debate Prompt 1

Should animals be used to test new products?

Scientists perform tests on animals every day. Some people think the tests are cruel and painful. What do you think?

Have you ever wondered how a company knows that its shampoo won't burn your eyes? Or make your scalp break out in a rash? Companies test their products before they sell them. And a lot of these products are tested on animals first.

Shampoo isn't the only thing tested on animals. Many medicines are also tested on animals. Each year, American researchers use more than 20 million mice, monkeys, rabbits, and other animals in scientific tests. These tests help make sure that products are safe. They also help researchers find cures for diseases.

But many animals suffer or die during the tests. Animal-rights **advocates** say this is wrong. One group, called PETA (People for the **Ethical** Treatment of Animals), says that animals have feelings—just like people. They get hungry and thirsty. They feel fear and pain.

PETA thinks that all testing on animals should stop. Others feel that it's the only way to fight disease and make safe products.

What do you think? Should animals be used to test new products?

Yes

Hardly anyone dies of smallpox, polio, or rabies anymore. Why? **Vaccines** helped wipe them out. And without animal testing, we wouldn't have vaccines. We need animal testing to find vaccines and to let scientists try out new medical techniques, such as heart transplants. Yes, it does hurt some animals, but it saves thousands of human lives. And that's really important.

No

Animals have feelings, just like humans. It's wrong when they die to test our products—especially those that have no real medical purpose. Companies like The Body Shop are developing new products without animal testing. Doctors and researchers should stop all animal testing now. It's not fair to put animals' lives at risk for humans.

Your Turn!

Write Now: What is your point of view? Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper voicing your opinion.

Debate Prompt 2

Should cell phones and beepers be allowed in class?

Some teachers say cell phones and pagers should be banned from school. Other people say kids need them. What do you think?

One of the problems with cell phones and beepers is that they can be a major source of distraction. There's nothing worse than someone's cell phone ringing in the middle of something important. And if the people actually start talking, it's even worse. This is why many teachers are trying to **ban** cell phones and pagers from school. They claim the **devices** disrupt their classrooms and totally blow their students' concentration. Worse, if they go off during a test, they can really hurt someone's grade.

But lots of people disagree. They say kids need pagers and cell phones. Some kids have to keep in touch with parents and work. Rather than banning beepers and cell phones, some say that school officials should just make kids use them responsibly.

What do you think? Should cell phones and beepers be allowed in class?

Yes Banning cell phones is totally unfair! Kids don't have phones and pagers for fun. They need them. They have to be able to **communicate** with their parents and their employers—especially if there's an emergency. Sure, kids should use their phones and beepers responsibly. But that's different from banning them altogether. Cell phones and pagers are here to stay. Kids might as well learn to use them responsibly while they're in school.

No What does a kid need a cell phone for? If there's an emergency, parents can always call the principal. And students can use a pay phone to keep in touch with their employers. Or they can keep a cell phone in their locker and check messages between classes. The fact is, cell phones and beepers are really just a way of keeping in touch with friends and dates. There are too many distractions in kids' lives already. They don't need another one.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: What is the strongest argument for allowing cell phones and beepers in class? What's the strongest argument against them?

Debate Prompt 3

In disasters like the sinking of the *Titanic*, who should be saved first?

Some people say that, in emergencies, women and children should be saved first. Do you agree with this?

When the *Titanic* was built, everyone said it was **indestructible**. But on the night of April 14, 1912, on its first **voyage** from England to New York, the *Titanic* hit an iceberg and sank. Of the 2,224 people aboard, only about 700 survived.

Many of the people who **survived** were women and children. This was because male passengers decided that women and children should get into the lifeboats first. There were many reasons for this. First, men believed that women and children were weaker, and needed to be helped. Second, they believed that the lives of women and children were more valuable. Finally, many men thought placing women and children first was simply the right and proper thing to do. "Women and children first" is how they did everything.

Does this make sense? What if the *Titanic* sank today? Do you think men should do the same thing?

Yes

It's a fact—women and children are more valuable to society than men. Women are the ones who have children. And children are the ones who keep a family going. So "women and children first" isn't just being nice. It makes sense. If the *Titanic* disaster were to happen today, men should let women and children go first.

No

The whole idea of "women and children first" is an insult. In today's world, everyone is equal. Women are just as strong as men—they don't need men to save them. Women can save themselves. Maybe children should go first. But if the *Titanic* disaster happened today, women and men should get in the lifeboats together.

Your Turn!

Write Now: Do you think "women and children first" is a good idea? Why or why not?

Debate Prompt 4

Should beaches have rules?

Some people say that beaches should have rules. Others say that rules ruin beaches. What do you think?

No doubt about it, summer is meant for kicking back and having fun. And there's no better place to chill out on a hot summer's day than the beach. In some parts of America, though, the beach is becoming more and more like school. No, there aren't any classes. But there are definitely a lot of rules.

On some beaches, for instance, there's absolutely no ball playing or boom boxes. On others you can't have dogs or fly a kite. And at several beaches in California, you're not allowed to throw a Frisbee or use a beach umbrella bigger than six feet around. If you have an illegal umbrella, you get a ticket.

Some people think this is ridiculous. They say the beach should be a place to get away from the rules and regulations of everyday life. Others say it's about time beaches had some restrictions. They say that with all the loud music and objects hurtling through the air, it's impossible to relax and have fun.

What do you think? Should beaches have rules?

Yes

Rules are a good idea. Some beaches are so crazy it's impossible to show up without getting **injured**. And on the quieter beaches, it just takes a couple of guys with a football to **ruin** everyone's good time. Rules give lifeguards more power to make beaches fun for everyone. Without rules, the loudest and most obnoxious people would always **dominate** the beach.

No

The beach is a place to play, hang out, and have fun. It is one of the last places in this country where you can do whatever you want without anyone hassling you. Making a lot of rules is just another way to make life more complicated. The beach should be easy, fun, and rule-free. If people want peace and quiet they should stay in bed!

Your Turn!

Write Now: Make a poster that lists rules you think a beach should have.

Debate Prompt
5

Should people be allowed to go barefoot anywhere they want?

Some people think that going barefoot should be banned in certain places. Others think that being barefoot should always be allowed. What do you think?

Everybody likes to go barefoot, right? There's nothing better than feeling cool grass or smooth pebbles between your toes. Even in cities, some people like it so much they go barefoot all the time, and this trend is picking up steam. There's even a club to **promote** going barefoot. It's called the "Dirty **Sole** Society" and has over six hundred members. People in this club do everything without shoes. They shop, work, and even go out to eat barefoot.

But certain people aren't so happy about this trend. Lots of restaurant owners, for instance, place signs on their doors saying shoes are required. They say that bare feet smell bad and "turn off" other customers.

Other people say going barefoot is dangerous. They say barefooters can be seriously injured if they step on glass, nails, or other sharp objects. They also say bare feet spread disease.

What do you think? Should people be allowed to go barefoot wherever they want?

Yes Barefoot people should be protected! This is a free country and if people want to be shoeless, no one should stop them. The idea that being barefoot is unhealthy is just a myth. And going barefoot is no more dangerous than anything else. Maybe the government ought to pick up all that broken glass rather than harass barefoot people. As for people who think it's disgusting, they need to lighten up!

No Feet are dirty and they stink. If people want to go barefoot, fine. But they should do it in their own homes and on their own property and leave the rest of us alone. Feet-people say their rights are being **violated** with these laws. But what about the right of people not to see or smell people's disgusting feet? What good is the law if it doesn't at least protect us from that?

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: Make a list of three reasons why someone would want to go barefoot anywhere they want. Make another list of three reasons why someone would not want to.

Debate Prompt 6

Should gun makers pay the cost of gun violence?

Some people say that gun makers should be held responsible for gun violence. Other people say this is unfair. What do you think?

It's against the law to make unsafe products in the United States. You can't build cars with bad brakes. You can't sell food that will make people sick. And you can't make toys that are dangerous to kids. So what about guns? Guns kill people every day. Should they be considered an unsafe product? Should the gun makers be punished?

Many states and cities have decided that guns are unsafe. And they are **suing** the companies that make them. They say that a gun is a product that leads to crime, injury, and death. And they're trying to get gun makers to pay for the harm these weapons have caused.

But gun makers say that guns are dangerous only if people **misuse** them. They claim that gun makers shouldn't be held responsible for the actions of criminals.

What do you think? Should gun makers be held responsible for the results of gun **violence**?

Yes Gun violence is a big problem in this country. Someone needs to take responsibility. Gun makers make lots of money from a product that leads to terrible violence. They should foot the bill to fix the problem. Gun makers should be forced to pay for police and hospitals. And they should be required to pay for the cost of installing safety locks on all their guns.

No People should be responsible for their own actions. Gun makers have nothing to do with how guns are used. If criminals misuse a gun, it's their fault—not the gun maker's. Besides, things like cars can be dangerous too. But no one wants to ban them. And no one would sue a car company if they were run over. Why should it be different for gun makers?

Your Turn!

Write Now: Imagine that you have lost a brother or sister to gun violence. Write a letter to your state senator explaining your point of view on this debate.

Debate Prompt 7

Should people lose their jobs if it helps the environment?

Of course the environment is important, but some say jobs are more important. What do you think?

What would you think if someone told you that an animal or a bird was about to become **extinct**? You'd want someone to do something about it, right? But what would you think if they told you that saving this animal might cost your parents their jobs? Tough question? Unfortunately, many communities across the United States struggle with this problem every day.

Many types of animals are in danger of becoming extinct. Saving them sometimes means closing the businesses that threaten them. Or it means that new businesses can't be built on lands that house threatened animals. And this leads to people losing jobs.

Environmentalists don't want to see people out of work. But they also say that nature has to be protected. Other people say that it's time to put human beings first. They say they don't want to destroy the **environment**, but they think that jobs are more important than animals.

What do you think? Are endangered species more important than jobs?

Yes Endangered species must be our first priority. It's unfortunate when people lose their jobs, but it's worse when animal species become extinct. The American wilderness is a national treasure. It belongs to everyone. And it would be sad to lose any part of it. More important, the planet's environment is very delicate. Losing a single kind of animal could have terrible **consequences**.

No It's time to put people first! People shouldn't lose their jobs because of animals. Sure, we should protect the environment as best we can. But saving the environment should not put people out of work. Anyway, environmentalists always exaggerate. Lots of times endangered species are just types of bugs or weeds. It's bad enough to think that an endangered owl might cost people their jobs. But bugs and weeds?

Your Turn!

Find Out More: Make a list of jobs that may harm certain parts of the environment.

Debate Prompt 8

Should children be allowed to enter beauty pageants?

Some people think girls should be in their teens before entering beauty pageants. Others think it's okay for these girls to be younger. What do you think?

There's a beauty pageant in town and a friend convinces you to go. You think beauty pageants are boring. But you go anyway, because you want to see what the big deal is. When you arrive at the contest, however, you're shocked because you discover that the **contestants** are only six years old.

Every year, over 100,000 girls under the age of twelve compete in beauty pageants in the United States. **Organizers** of these pageants say they teach young girls important lessons that will help them later in life. They say the girls learn about hard work, discipline, and self-confidence.

Other people say that children should not be put through the stress of beauty pageants. They say that six-year-olds should not have to worry about things like self-discipline or being the most beautiful little girl.

What do you think? Should children be beauty queens?

Yes

People who want to stop these pageants should lighten up. **Participating** in beauty pageants is just like playing Little League. Beauty pageants can teach a girl how to be self-confident and a good sport. More important, they're lots of fun. Six-year-olds love wearing glamorous dresses and fancy hair styles. And their parents and family love to see them all dressed up.

No

All beauty pageants are ridiculous, but these pageants are the worst. Teaching girls to compete over their looks is wrong, especially when they're so young. Little girls should learn to feel confident about their abilities, not their looks. And who cares if a six-year-old learns about discipline. Six-year-old girls should be having fun, not working. Beauty pageants are not just a waste of time. They're harmful!

Your Turn!

Talk About It: What is the minimum age someone should be to enter a beauty pageant? Why?

Debate Prompt 9

Should student athletes have to get good grades to play sports?

Some say athletes should have at least a "C" average to play sports. Others say this is too strict. What do you think?

Picture this: A good friend of yours has always **struggled** in school. He's a great guy. But he has a hard time doing well on tests. **Despite** his troubles in school, however, your friend has a few things going for him. He happens to be the very best hockey goalie in the state. In fact, he's so good, there's a chance he'll go pro. There's just one thing. In the middle of his best season ever, when he's breaking every record in the book, the school board passes a new rule. They say that if you don't have at least a "C" average, you can't play sports. Your friend's average is a "D." Suddenly, he's off the team. Is this fair?

Some school boards say it is and have already passed rules like this. They say that grades must come first. Others disagree. They say that sports are healthy, positive activities that should not be linked to grades.

What do you think? Should athletes with bad grades be kicked off the "team"?

Yes

School is about learning. Everything else should come second. It's wrong that kids can **coast** through school without learning much. This rule will make kids work harder to get a good education. Anyway, it's hard to become a professional athlete. People need something to fall back on. And even if someone does go pro, they'll still need to know how to read and do math.

No

Sports and grades have nothing to do with each other. If a kid can become a great athlete, nothing should stand in the way. And even if some kids have no chance of going pro, they shouldn't be punished for their grades. Think of everything you learn from sports: teamwork, fast thinking, discipline, and other skills. There are a lot of things you need to know to survive in the world, and you can't learn them all from books.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: Imagine you are the star football player at your school. How would you feel if you were kept out of the game until your grades improved?

Debate Prompt 10

Should coats made with dog fur be against the law?

Some people say making coats from dog fur is cruel. Others say dog fur is just like any other fur. What do you think?

Let's say you're at a department store looking for a new winter coat. You see lots of things you like. But there's one coat that you have to have. After a long talk with your mother, she agrees to help you buy it. You're thrilled! There's only one problem. When you get home, you discover that the coat's really warm and snuggly collar is made out of dog fur. What do you do?

Recently lots of people have faced this situation. One company accidentally sold coats with dog-fur collars. They thought the fur collars came from **coyotes**. But they were wrong. When they found out, they quickly stopped selling the coats and gave people their money back. They didn't have to do this—it isn't against the law to sell coats made from dogs. But some people think it should be.

What do you think? Should dog-fur coats be against the law?

Yes

Of course it should be against the law. A dog is not a wild animal. A dog is a pet. In many homes, dogs are like members of the family. They make good **companions**, and they are **loyal** to humans. They should be treated with respect. Plus, the way the dogs are killed is horrible. They are suffocated or drowned. Wearing dog fur is totally wrong!

No

What's the difference between a dog and any other animal? People wear coats made from foxes. They wear snakeskin boots. And people eat all sorts of animals. Why not use a dog to make a coat? It's ridiculous to say it's okay to kill one animal and not another. Anyway, a lot of dog fur comes from China, where most dogs aren't pets.

Your Turn!

Write About It: Write an e-mail message to your senator explaining either why dog fur coats should be outlawed or why they should be kept legal.

Debate Prompt 11

Should boxing be banned?

Some people say boxing is too dangerous. Others say it is no different from any other sport. What do you think?

Boxing is a one-of-a-kind sport. It's an exciting, physically challenging test of **endurance**, and a **spectacular** one-on-one competition. Boxing is also a major money-maker. Some boxers make $10 million for just one fight. And television stations and arena owners make even more. Why? Lots of people love boxing, and they're willing to pay big money to see it.

But recently, some people have tried to make boxing illegal. They say that boxing is much too dangerous and that it leads to terrible injuries like brain damage and **paralysis**. They also say boxing desensitizes people to violence by turning fighting into a sport.

But other people say that the government should not make boxing illegal. They say that if two people want to box, then no one should be able to stand in their way.

What do you think? Should boxing be banned?

Yes

Ban boxing for good! It's just too dangerous. Ask Evander Holyfield. Mike Tyson bit off a piece of his ear in a boxing match. And what about Gerald McClellan? This former boxing champ was beaten into a coma at the age of twenty-seven. Now he's brain-damaged and blind. Dog fights and rooster fights are illegal in America. It's about time we stop human fights too!

No

Boxing may be risky, but this is a free country. If people want to step into a boxing ring, no one should stop them. Besides, more people are hurt or killed every year in other sports, including football and auto racing. No one's trying to ban those sports. If you don't like boxing, don't watch it. But don't ban it.

Your Turn!

Find Out More: Take a poll of five people. Are they for or against a boxing ban?

Debate Prompt 12

Do police belong in schools?

Trouble in schools? Some say that police are the answer. What do you think?

Police officers around the country have a new **beat**. It's called public school. Counties in more than forty states now have police officers patrolling their school grounds. It's one of the many ways schools are trying to stop violence. But the presence of cops in schools is causing **controversy**.

People in favor of police officers in schools say the cops prevent violence. A kid is less likely to start a fight if a police officer is there. And if there's an emergency, there is someone there who is trained to handle it. Also, people think having a police officer around makes kids feel safer.

But other people think having cops in school is a terrible idea. They say it will make kids feel like school is a dangerous place. They also claim that the police officers will make kids feel like they are in prison.

What do you think? Should we have cops in our schools?

Yes Public schools aren't what they used to be. There's a lot of violence now. If having police officers in the schools puts an end to that, then they should be in every school. Besides, we've been told our whole lives that police officers are our friends. Why shouldn't they "be our friends" in school as well?

No Are you kidding? Just because a few school hallways are a little **rowdy** at times, it doesn't mean we need police guarding the place. Police make students feel uncomfortable, too. School is a place to grow and learn how to think. You don't need armed guards to help you do that.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: Would you feel safer if there were police in your school? Why or why not? What do your friends think?

Debate Prompt 13

Should hunting be banned as a sport?

Some people think that hunting should be banned. Other people disagree. What do you think?

Every year about 14 million Americans go hunting. They shoot at bear, moose, prairie dogs, and even pigeons. Some of these animals become food. Some are stuffed for trophies. Others are sold for their skins.

In recent years, however, hunters have been the ones under attack. Hunting seasons have been shortened. Land has been placed off-limits for hunters. And certain animals have been declared **endangered**, which means no one is allowed to kill them. Why? Many people say hunting is cruel and **inhumane**. These people also say that hunting destroys the environment.

Hunters say that they're just doing what people have always done. They say hunting is an American **tradition** and that no one has the right to tell them to stop. Many hunters also say they need to hunt because it provides food for their families.

What do you think? Should hunting be banned?

Yes

Very few people hunt because they need to feed their families. Today, people don't even need to eat meat at all. Besides, hunters often shoot at animals that they aren't allowed to hunt. In Colorado, hunters are allowed to shoot at elk, but not moose. But they keep shooting the moose anyway. It would be better if they weren't allowed to hunt at all.

No

Why is a hunter's bullet any more cruel than a mountain lion's fang? Every animal survives by eating living things, whether it's plants or animals. Besides, in some states, people have to hunt and store food for the winter. There's a reason why the moose is the most hunted of all animals in the state of Alaska. One moose can supply more than five hundred pounds of meat!

Your Turn!

Find Out More: Research what kinds of animals are hunted in your state. When are they hunted and for how long?

Debate Prompt 14

Should students get paid for attending school?

Some people say we should pay kids for showing up for school. Others say that education should be the only **motivation** for going to school. What do you think?

It's 7:00 A.M. and you're not sure if you're well enough to go to school. You're not quite sick, but you think you might have a cold. Maybe just a little cold. Maybe only the sniffles. So you tell your mom that you should definitely stay home—just to play it safe. The next thing you know, she's handing you your lunch and pushing you out the door.

Sound familiar? It's not like this for everyone. In some schools across the United States, kids will do anything to not miss a single day of school. And there's a reason for this **dedication**. At their schools they get paid for good attendance!

Many people are trying to stop this. They say kids shouldn't be paid for attending school. They say this is nothing more than bribery. Others say that if getting kids to stay in school is so important, then paying them is an idea that could work.

What do you think? Should kids be paid for good attendance?

Yes

For some students, school is really hard. Every day is a challenge. We need to do everything we can to keep them in school. Paying them can prevent them from dropping out. Also, good attendance leads to good grades. That's worth whatever it costs. If we need to pay kids to do better in school, we should. It will be worth it in the end.

No

Is this a joke? Students should not be bribed to attend school! There are tons of kids around the world who are working in **sweatshops**. Give them the education that paid kids are too lazy to get on their own. School is a place where you learn how to deal with the future. If some kids don't want to take advantage of our free system—then tell them to take a hike.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: Ask two adults how they feel about this issue. Then ask two kids. How are their opinions similar or different?

Debate Prompt 15

If you do the crime, should your parents do the time?

Some say that parents of young criminals should be punished. Others say their child's crime is not their fault. What do you think?

When kids do things that are wrong, their parents normally get angry. But they usually don't get **sentenced** or fined themselves. Until now! Today, more than 35 states have laws holding parents legally responsible for their children's actions.

In California, parents can be forced to pay up to $25,000 to cover the cost of property damage their children cause. In Oregon, parents can be fined up to $1000 or be ordered to attend parenting classes if their kids commit juvenile crimes. Some states are even cutting welfare payments if their children miss school regularly.

But many people think these policies are terrible. They say parents have some responsibilities, but that the only person to blame for a crime is a criminal. They also say that the laws send a bad message to kids—it tells them that they aren't responsible for their own actions.

What do you think? When teens commit crimes, should their parents do the time?

Yes Kids don't just end up bad. They become criminals because no one has taught them right from wrong. Sure, there are lots of things that affect kids. Schools, friends, society—all of these **contribute** to how a kid behaves. But no one affects kids' actions more than parents. If a kid ends up a criminal, the parents are **partially** responsible. And they should be punished.

No This is ridiculous! Sure, it's important for parents to raise their kids right. But at a certain point all people have to take responsibility for their own actions. When kids commit crimes, they're responsible, not their parents. Anyway, parents don't always have as much control as you'd think. Good parents can end up with a bad kid. They shouldn't be punished for that. It's not their fault.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: What do you think? Tell why it would be a good rule. Tell why it would be a bad rule.

Debate Prompt 16

Should teen criminals be locked up in adult prisons?

Some say that teens who commit serious crimes should go to adult prisons. Others say that teens need their own detention centers. What do you think?

"Do the crime, do the time!" That's what lawmakers around the country are saying to teens who **commit** violent crimes. Currently, there are about five thousand kids under eighteen behind bars in adult prisons. And soon there may be more. Congress wants to pass a new law that would send teens as young as fourteen to jail with adult criminals. These lawmakers argue that sending teens to juvenile prisons lets them off easy. They say that only hard time in adult prisons will convince a teen not to commit crimes.

But not everyone wants teen criminals to be tried as adults. Many experts say that what teen criminals need most is a chance to turn their lives around. They say that adult prison offers little chance for a teen to **reform**. They only make young people more hardened and violent.

What do you think? Do you think that teens should be sent to adult prisons?

Yes Kids who do adult crimes should serve adult time. Juvenile sentences are not tough enough for teens who commit violent crimes like murder. Violent criminals are dangerous and should be locked up, no matter how old they are. To do anything else is not just wrong—it's dangerous. The law needs to crack down on teen crimes and make our streets safe from gangs, guns, and drugs!

No Kids who commit serious crimes need serious help. They need to be in rehabilitation or juvenile detention where they can clean up their act. Locking kids up with adult criminals only **increases** their problems. They don't get the help they need. Worse, adult prisoners will often attack young people in jail. Adult prison is no place for a kid.

Your Turn!

Write Now: You probably feel strongly about this issue. Share your opinion by writing a paragraph explaining your point of view.

Debate Prompt 17

Should you change the way you dress because of what other people might think?

Should you wear what you want? Or should you wear what others think you should wear? What do you think?

Your parents have been complaining about the way you dress. They say you can express yourself, but that maybe you should tone it down. Spiky hair is all right, but not all the time. As for the nose ring—they can live with it, but not at your grandmother's birthday party.

You're sick of all these fashion rules and tell your parents that how you dress is no one's business but yours. You have to be yourself.

A month later, parent-teacher **conferences** roll around. You've been doing well this semester, so you're not sweating it. But when you catch your parents heading off to the meetings, you can't believe your eyes. Your mother is wearing a red mini-skirt and an enormous blonde wig. Your father's wearing a gross Hawaiian shirt and torn shorts.

You're furious! You say you'll be the laughing stock of the school; they tell you they're just being themselves.

What do you say now? Should you change the way you dress because of what other people might think?

Yes It's a fact: People judge you by the clothes you wear. Sometimes that's wrong. But if you're meeting someone who doesn't know you, they don't always have much to go on. You may be a great person. But if you're wearing a shirt with a skull on it, someone might find that frightening. You don't always have to **conform**. But sometimes it's best to dress according to the situation.

No You should always be yourself. It's as simple as that. If people are **shallow** enough to judge you by the clothes you wear, that's their problem, not yours. Anyway, if your family and friends really love you, they'll get over what might scare them at first. Even grandparents. Probably half the stuff kids do seems strange to grandparents. But most of the time they manage to love their grandkids anyway.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: What's your view on this debate? Think about the other side and defend it.

Debate Prompt 18

Should businesses be forced to deliver to every neighborhood?

One politician wants a law that forces businesses to deliver. But is she right or is she making matters worse?

Imagine that you've been **craving** pizza all day. Finally, once you get home, you call to have one delivered. But the pizza company says it won't deliver to your neighborhood. "A driver was robbed last week," an employee says. "You'll have to pick up your pizza here."

Okay, so maybe you live in a high-crime area. But you'd never rob anyone. Is the pizza company being unfair? In San Francisco, California, one lawmaker thinks so. Neither Domino's nor Mr. Pizzaman would deliver in her neighborhood. So she took action. She helped pass a new law that makes it **illegal** for businesses to deliver to some neighborhoods but not others.

Her opponents say this law is unfair. They say it's not Domino's and Mr. Pizzaman that are affected by this new law. It's their employees. It's the drivers who now have to risk their lives just to deliver pizzas

What do you think? Should businesses be required to deliver to every neighborhood?

Yes If living in a certain neighborhood doesn't make you a criminal, why should delivery services **discriminate** against you? After all, delivery is available to those who live in other neighborhoods. If delivering pizzas is so unsafe, pizza places shouldn't deliver to anyone. Life is tough enough for good citizens who live in areas with high crime rates. Don't punish them for it.

No It's easy for politicians to talk about fairness. They're not the ones who have to deliver pizzas to high-crime neighborhoods. Across the country, pizza deliverers have been robbed, attacked, and even murdered. Doing your job shouldn't mean risking your life. Businesses should be able to make their own decisions about where they deliver. A company has the right to protect its employees.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: If you were a delivery person, would you want to drive into a high-crime neighborhood? What if you lived in that neighborhood? Would you expect businesses to deliver to you?

Debate Prompt 19

Should the government rate music?

Some people say that the government should rate music. Others say ratings hurt free speech. What do you think?

Picture this: Your favorite music group comes out with a new record. You've heard that some of the lyrics might not be **suitable** for kids, and your parents are pretty strict about that kind of stuff. After talking it over with them, however, they decide you can get the album. But when you go to the store to buy it, the store manager won't sell it to you. He says it's illegal for you to buy it because you're too young. Your parents say it's okay. But the government says it isn't. Who's right?

Right now, there are no laws **regulating** the sale of music to kids. Only music companies rate albums. And music stores decide for themselves who to sell them to. But some people want the government to start rating records. And they want the government to make it illegal for young people to buy certain kinds of music.

What do you think? Should the government rate the music you listen to?

Yes

If record companies rate their own music, who knows what they're going to say? They're only interested in making a sale. There is no way they are going to give an honest review. Anyway, what difference does a label make if it doesn't stop a kid from buying a record? Without government regulations, record stores will sell whatever they can to whoever wants to buy.

No

If the government starts rating music, they're saying what people can and can't listen to. That's **censorship** and a violation of the First Amendment! And if they get away with censoring music, it's just a matter of time before they censor television and books. Kids and their parents should have the right to decide what music kids listen to. The government should stay out of it!

Your Turn!

Talk About It: Poll other students in your class. Have they ever bought CDs that their parents might not have wanted them to buy? What happened?

Debate Prompt 20

Are teen juries a good idea?

In courts around the country, kids are judging other kids. Is this a good idea?

Picture this: You're on a field trip to the town courthouse. While you're there you get to meet many important people: a judge, lawyers, and even the mayor. Then your teacher says you're going to watch a real trial. But when the trial begins, and the jury walks into the **jury box**, you discover that the jury is made up of kids your own age! Surprised? Believe it or not, these trials are happening all across the country.

Right now, there are more than 200 youth courts in 25 states. In youth courts, young people are tried by juries of other young people. The juries can give sentences of community service. They can also recommend that the **accused** go to counseling. But there is one thing that the teen juries can't do—they can't send kids to jail.

Many people think youth courts are a great way to involve kids in the **justice** system. Others say kids are too young to hand out fair sentences.

What do you think? Are youth courts a good idea?

Yes

Youth courts work! The statistics speak for themselves: Only 25 percent of kids sentenced in youth court commit crimes again. That's much less than in regular court. Plus, youth courts may prevent kids from committing crimes in the first place. Why? No one wants to go on trial in front of their friends. Youth court also lets kids see how courts work. By serving on juries, they get a firsthand understanding of American justice.

No

What? These kids are still in school. How could they know enough to be on a jury? This has nothing to do with rights. You need experience and wisdom to be in a courtroom. Anyway, what kid is going to take a youth court seriously? Being sentenced by other kids isn't scary. This is just another way of letting people who commit crimes off easy. If they do a real crime, put them in front of a real jury.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: *If you were a juror on a teen jury, do you think you would be easier or harder on the defendant than a regular judge? Why?*

Debate Prompt 21

Is space exploration worth the money we spend on it?

Some say space exploration costs too much. Others say it's worth it. What do you think?

Your best friend wants to be an **astronaut**. She's really smart and she talks about space all the time. One day she tells you that **NASA** is sending a robot to Mars. She says it costs a lot of money. But she also says it's worth it because of the ways it will help science. You agree. Your friend makes it all sound so exciting. But the very next day your school announces that, due to government budget cuts, it is dropping the school orchestra and football team. The principal says the school can't afford them. How do you feel now?

Every year, NASA spends about 14 billion dollars on space **exploration**. Many people feel this is a waste. They say this money should be spent on things here on Earth, like hospitals and schools.

Other people think space exploration is worth the money because it creates jobs and contributes to science.

What do you think? Is space exploration worth the money?

Yes Space exploration is worth every penny. It's not just a question of learning about the universe. Space exploration creates jobs and improves lives. Many of today's new products are a direct result of space exploration. Space exploration has even led to important medical discoveries. Who knows what else we will find out there? We have to keep exploring space!

No Put first things first! There are too many problems here on Earth to worry about what's in space. Science is important. And everyone wants to know more about the universe. But what do you tell people who don't have enough food? When everyone has enough to eat and can afford to see a doctor, then we can go into space. Until then, we should wait.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: Think of all the things that the government spends money on. List three things that are more important than space exploration. List three things that are less important.

Debate Prompt 22

If you find $100, is it yours to keep?

Some people would keep the money. Others would try to give it back. What would you do?

There's a citywide bike race coming up and you're the best biker around. You're definitely faster than the kids in your neighborhood and probably faster than the ones in the city. There's only one problem. You're bike is old and starting to fall apart. You're **convinced** you need a new one to win the race.

Then something crazy happens. You're in the park one day and you spot something. When you check it out, you discover it's a **wad** of cash that totals $100. You can't believe it. With what you've saved already, it's enough to help you buy a **decent** bike. Your troubles are over! Or so you think.

Pretty soon you start to feel guilty. You think maybe you should tell someone. And you imagine how unhappy the person who lost the money must be. You really want a new bike. But could you live with yourself if you kept the money?

What would you do? Would you try to give the money back?

Yes

Giving the money back is the only thing to do. Everyone could use extra cash. And it would be tempting to keep it. But if it's not yours, you should turn it over to the police. Anyway, everyone would want to know where the money came from. You'd have to explain sooner or later, and then some people might be disappointed in your decision.

No

Are you kidding? Take the money and run! Anyone irresponsible enough to lose all that money doesn't deserve it. Or they're so rich, they don't care. This is a dog-eat-dog world. You have to take what you can get. Sure it's sad that someone lost all that money. But it would be just as sad if you had to give it back. The best thing to do is keep quiet and enjoy your good luck.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: What if you lost money? Would you want someone to return the money? Would you understand if someone did not want to return it?

Debate Prompt 23

Some malls in America have banned teens. Is this fair?

Teens say going to the mall is a right. But some malls say it's a privilege. What do you think?

It's Friday night and you're going to a birthday party. But you don't have a present yet, so you and a friend make a quick trip to the mall. But when you arrive, a security guard tells you to leave. You tell him you haven't done anything wrong, but it doesn't matter. The mall has ordered a ban on teens!

This is really happening in Bloomington, Minnesota. Bloomington's Mall of America recently banned kids under sixteen after 6:00 P.M. on weekends, unless an adult **accompanies** them. Mall officials took this drastic action because store owners and customers complained that most kids were disruptive. They said teens roamed around in packs and **intimidated** people. Many other malls are considering bans as well.

But some say bans like this are unfair. Opponents of the bans say they discriminate against a whole group of people just because of a few troublemakers.

What do you think? Is a mall ban fair?

Yes

Lots of kids go to malls just to cause trouble. Bans are a good way to keep these kids under control. Also, malls are private property. That means they don't have to let in kids if they don't want to. Besides, kids spend too much time at the mall as it is. They should be doing something productive rather than wandering around malls all day. Going to malls is a **privilege**, not a right.

No

This is a violation of kids' rights! Kids spend money at malls just like everyone else and they're entitled to equal treatment. Also, malls have replaced the downtown area in many communities. Kids don't have other places to go. Anyway, it's unfair to punish all kids just because some of them cause trouble. There are other ways to deal with troublesome kids besides a ban.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: If malls aren't allowed to ban teens, what can malls do to control teen problems at the mall?

Debate Prompt 24

If you see someone cheating on a test, should you tell?

Some kids would tell a teacher if they saw someone cheating. Others would keep quiet. What would you do?

You know cheating is wrong. And you'd never **consider** doing it. But what would you do if you caught someone else cheating?

It would be a pretty easy question if someone stole your homework. You'd probably tell your teacher. And if someone was selling answers to a test, you'd probably report it too. But what if you caught a classmate taking a look at your answer sheet during a test. Then what?

You don't want to **betray** a classmate, who could get into a lot of trouble. You also don't want to be known as a rat. But you studied hard for this test. Why should this kid **benefit** from your hard work? Plus, if you don't tell, you might get in trouble. If your teacher found out, he might think you were in on it.

How would you handle it? If you saw a classmate cheating, would you tell your teacher?

Yes Turn the cheater in! Cheating is totally unfair. Why should some kids work hard just so other kids can steal their answers? There should be no free rides. If students want good grades, they should earn them, just like everyone else. Besides, cheaters need to be stopped for their own good. It may seem like nothing now, but eventually cheaters will wish they learned more in school.

No Don't be a rat! Cheating is not right, but kids should learn to solve their own problems rather than always running to a teacher. It's much better to talk to your classmate yourself. If you catch someone looking at your work during a test, let the person know you noticed and want it to stop. If it doesn't, then think about telling the teacher. But until then, you should handle the problem on your own rather than being a tattletale.

Your Turn!

Write Now: Write one reason why you should tell the teacher about a cheater. Write one reason why you might not.

Debate Prompt 25

Are teen curfews a good thing?

Some people say that kids should be home at a certain time. Other people say curfews violate kids' rights. What do you think?

You're at a friend's house practicing for the school play. You have a lot of lines to learn and the play is in a few days. But you're a hard worker. And you're a good actor. And your friend is willing to stay up late working with you. There's just one problem. Your town has a curfew. You have to go home early.

All across America, towns are **instituting** curfews for kids. Of the country's 200 largest cities, 146 already have curfews. Many of the cities report drops in their crime rate as a result. These cities also say that with curfews in place, fewer kids are victims of crimes.

But some people want to end these curfews. They say they are a violation of kids' rights, especially since some kids have to stay out late because of school activities and jobs.

What do you think? Are curfews a good idea?

Yes

Everyone always talks about kids' rights. What about the right to feel safe? Cities with curfews have less crime. This makes life better for everyone. Anyway, why do kids need to stay out late? They should be home doing their schoolwork instead of **cruising** around. A curfew will help kids **focus** on what's important and keep them out of trouble.

No

Curfews are wrong, wrong, wrong! If you had a curfew for adults, there'd be less crime too. But no one's trying to keep adults at home at night. Why should kids be treated differently from adults? Besides, lots of kids need to be out late. They have school activities and jobs that end late. We should find other ways of reducing crime.

Your Turn!

Find Out More: What are some things, instead of curfews, that cities and towns can do to prevent problems?

Debate Prompt 26

Is year-round school a good idea?

Some people say kids should go to school year-round. Others say that's too much work for kids. What do you think?

What did you do on your summer vacation? About 5 percent of U.S. school kids today could not answer that question. Why? They go to school year-round.

These days, year-round schedules are increasingly popular. Some schools lengthen the normal 180-day school year in order to improve the students' education. Other schools are in **session** 180 days a year, but scatter three-week vacations throughout. And other schools teach kids in **alternating** shifts—that means some kids have their summer vacations in the middle of winter!

People who support year-round schooling say that kids learn more that way. They say kids don't forget what they learn over a long summer break, and teachers spend less time reviewing old material.

Opponents say that year-round schooling does little to **boost** learning. They say it takes away a very important rest period for kids and increases student and teacher burnout.

What do you think? Is year-round schooling a good idea?

Yes Summer vacation is nothing more than a chance for kids to forget everything they've learned. Worse, it's a chance for them to get into trouble. Kids have too much free time as it is. They don't need three months with nothing to do. Year-round school improves a kid's education, and gives students something productive to do over the summer. Keep them in school!

No For most kids, summer vacation is a much-needed break. But that's not to say they aren't productive. They play sports, go to camp, and participate in things they can't do during the school year. More importantly, summer is the best time for kids to get jobs. Most kids have to work for their spending money and to save for college. If you keep kids in school all summer, you'll cut off their chance to earn money.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: What are three positive things about year-round school? What are three negative things?

Debate Prompt 27

Should skateboarding be banned in public places?

Some say skateboarding in public places is dangerous. Others say it's not only fun but a right. What do you think?

It's Saturday afternoon. You and your friends head to the park to ride your skateboards. But when you arrive, a police officer stops you. She says skateboarding has been banned in the park and tells you to leave.

These days, lots of skateboarders are finding themselves without a place to skate. Cities and towns across the country have banned skateboarding in public places. Many skateboarders think these bans are unfair. They say that skateboarding should be treated the same as any other sport. They also complain that there aren't many other places for kids to skate. Most communities don't have skateboarding parks.

City officials say the bans are **necessary** because skateboarders **disrupt** traffic and bother **pedestrians**. They also say that skateboarding is extremely dangerous. Every year, thousands of skateboarders injure themselves and others while skating in public areas.

What do you think? Should skateboarding be banned in public places?

Yes

Skateboarders have no respect for other people. They cut off cars, bump into people, and clog up sidewalks. Skateboarding is also dangerous. Skaters can seriously injure themselves as well as other people. Worse, if skateboarders hurt themselves on public property, they could sue. Local communities just can't take that risk.

No

Skateboarding is no more dangerous than anything else. Many more people get hurt on bikes every year and no one wants to ban them. Anyway, with practice and the right gear, skateboarding is safe. Also, if kids can't skate in public places, where can they skate? People should realize that skateboarding is just another way for kids to get exercise and have fun.

Your Turn!

Write Now: Make a list of three points that the two sides of this debate might agree on.

Debate Prompt 28

Should Olympic athletes be tested for drugs?

Some say that Olympic athletes should be tested for drugs. Others say this is a bad idea. What do you think?

"Faster, higher, stronger" is the Olympic motto. Some Olympic athletes will do anything to run faster, jump higher, or be stronger. Lots of times this means hard work, discipline, and **sacrifice**. Other times, it means breaking the law. Some athletes take performance-enhancing drugs, like steroids, to improve their chances in a competition.

The International Olympic Committee believes that drug use goes against the spirit of the Olympics. Because of this, they have **established** a drug-testing program. Every athlete who competes is tested at least once, and then may be subjected to more **random** tests later.

But some people think it's the drug tests that go against the spirit of the Olympics. They say Olympic officials have become police officers and that the tests are an invasion of privacy. But they say the worst thing is that sometimes the tests can be wrong.

What do you think? Does drug testing at the Olympics make sense?

Yes Drug use among top athletes has long been a problem. Without drug testing, Olympic competition would be about who uses the most drugs, not about who trains hardest and has the best athletic skills. Athletes who use performance-enhancing drugs are like marathoners wearing in-line skates. In other words, using drugs is the same as cheating. Plus, drugs like steroids can kill. Drug use has to be stopped.

No Any athlete who tests positive for drugs is banned from the games. Drug tests are usually accurate. But sometimes they show a positive result even when an athlete is only using something like allergy medicine. When that happens at the Olympics, an innocent athlete is cheated out of the dream of a lifetime. That's not fair. Unless the tests are foolproof, they shouldn't be used.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: *How would you feel if you found out that your Olympic hero had won because of performance-enhancing drugs?*

Debate Prompt 29

Should sports teams drop Native American names?

Many Native Americans think these names are offensive. Other people say Native Americans are too sensitive. What do you think?

Imagine you're in charge of a famous sports team. The team has a colorful history and thousands of **enthusiastic** fans. Then one day someone tells you that your team's name is **offensive**. They ask you to change it. What do you do?

A few years ago, the Miami Indian Tribe asked Miami University of Ohio to change its team's name. The Miami Indians said the name *Redskins* was insulting. Miami University agreed and changed its name to the *Red Hawks*. Other schools have done the same.

But not all sports teams have been willing to change. In Mukwonago, Wisconsin, for instance, the high school refused to give up its name *Warriors*. The administration said they were **upholding** school tradition and supporting the fans of Mukwonago High. They also said that the name *Warriors* honors Native Americans and the role they have played in local history.

What do you think? Should sports teams have to change their names?

Yes

Hello! Insulting a group of people to protect a sports tradition is ridiculous! These names make people feel bad and should be changed. It's that simple. Anyway, changing a team's name is not that big a deal. It's not like it would cause them to lose. If the fans are really loyal, they'll keep coming to games even after the team's name has changed.

No

Changing the names of sports teams is unfair to fans. Imagine supporting a team for a number of years only to have its name changed. Sports traditions are important and should be protected. Besides, naming sports teams after Native Americans is an honor. If Native Americans feel insulted by names like *Redskins* and *Warriors*, they are being too sensitive.

Your Turn!

Find Out More: Make a list of all the teams that use Native American names. Can you come up with other names to use instead?

Debate Prompt 30

Should celebrities be responsible for the products they endorse?

If a celebrity endorses a product, should he or she be held responsible for how it's made? Some say yes. Others say no. What do you think?

Imagine you're a famous basketball player. You play on a championship team, you've got lots of fans, and, best of all, someone is paying you $10 million to put your name on a pair of sneakers. Then one day you find out the shoes you **endorse** are made by child laborers. How would you feel? Would you feel responsible?

A couple of years ago Michael Jordan and Kathy Lee Gifford faced this very problem. Some of Gifford's line of clothes were made by Honduran girls paid just 31 cents an hour. And, according to news reports, some sneakers that have Jordan's name on them were made by ten-year-old children in Indonesia.

Many people are angry with Gifford and Jordan for being involved with companies that **exploit** children. Others aren't upset. They say that celebrities are paid to endorse just the product—not the way it's made.

What do you think? Are celebrities responsible for products they endorse?

Yes

Celebrities have a lot of power in this country. People trust them and do what they say. They should be held responsible for what they tell people to do. Anyway, celebrities make millions of dollars endorsing products. The least they can do is make sure these products aren't made by children. Celebrities should use their fame to help people, not just to make money.

No

Every person is responsible for his or her own **decisions**. If people don't like how a product is made, they shouldn't buy it. Anyway, celebrities have nothing to do with where a product comes from. It's the companies that make the products that are really responsible. Punishing celebrities will not change anything. If people want to make a difference they should force businesses to change.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: Are you more or less likely to buy a product that was endorsed by a celebrity? Tell why.

Debate Prompt 31

Should schools have dress codes?

Some teachers say uniforms help students do well in school. Others say they spoil kids' creativity. Who do you think is right?

How would you feel if you arrived at school one day wearing the exact same outfit as everyone else? For some kids this happens every day. They go to schools where uniforms are **mandatory**.

These days, more and more schools are making students wear uniforms. How come, you might ask. Well, teachers at these schools say that uniforms help students to focus on their studies—rather than on their fashion **dilemmas**. They also say that uniforms "level the playing field" among students from different economic backgrounds. The stress of having the latest clothes can be intense. And not all kids can afford to keep up with the new fashions.

Other schools have refused to adopt uniforms. These schools say that clothes offer kids and teens a healthy way to be creative. Clothes help kids express their individuality. They also say that uniforms make students uncomfortable, which makes it hard for them to study.

What do you think? Should uniforms be required at school?

Yes

Give us a break. There's too much competition over clothing in schools today. Kids should focus on their schoolwork, rather than on appearances. They should also be finding better ways to express their individuality. Choosing a sweater to wear isn't creative. And there are bigger problems associated with clothes. Gangs identify themselves by certain colors and symbols. School uniforms get rid of this problem.

No

Are you kidding? Putting on a tie doesn't make someone any smarter. Uniforms only make kids uncomfortable; they don't turn kids into better students. More important, uniforms **hinder** free thinking and teach kids to conform. The solution to problems such as gang violence is to encourage kids to think for themselves, and to not follow the crowd. Making kids wear uniforms teaches the opposite lesson.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: Why do you think some teachers would like dress codes for students? Why do you think some parents don't support dress codes?

Debate Prompt 32

Should celebrities speak out on political issues?

Some people think big stars should take a stand on issues. Others think they should keep quiet. What do you think?

In 2000, Ricky Martin urged President Clinton to halt military tests on an island off Puerto Rico. Martin is just the latest celebrity to **take a stand** on a political cause. U2's Bono has campaigned for international human rights. The band Rage Against the Machine has crusaded against censorship. And Rosie O'Donnell has advocated increased gun control.

Many celebrities feel they're **obliged** to speak out on important issues because they can reach a large audience. They think they should use their fame to do something good—especially if it's a cause they believe in.

But not everybody thinks celebrities should take a stand on political issues. Critics say that celebrities have far too much **influence**. Critics also say that big stars often don't know what they're talking about. They say that singers and actors should leave political issues for the experts to figure out.

What do you think? Should celebrities speak out on political causes?

Yes

Celebrities have a lot of power. They should use it to do good things. Since their fans and the press will care about what they say, celebrities have a duty to publicly express their beliefs. Whether celebrities like it or not, they are role models. They owe it to their fans to show some leadership. And they owe it to the world to put their power to good use.

No

If celebrities want to be role models, they should work for charitable causes. Or they should donate their money to political groups. Too often, celebrities get involved in things they don't know anything about. And people end up listening to them rather than people who are truly experts on the issues. Anyway, lots of celebrities just use political causes to improve their own public image.

Your Turn!

Find Out More: Make a list of celebrities who do speak out on issues. Have any of these celebrities influenced your opinions?

Debate Prompt
33

Should kids have to address teachers as Ma'am and Sir?

Some people say using these titles is a sign of respect. Others say this is ridiculous. What do you think?

Many educators and politicians in Louisiana believe that students lack respect for their teachers. To **counteract** this, the Louisiana government has passed a law requiring students to call their teachers Ma'am or Sir. Each school is responsible for punishing students who break the rule. However, schools can neither suspend nor expel these students.

Legislators believe this law will **instill** discipline and respect in the classroom. They say that this will lead to a better learning environment. More importantly, they say it will lead to safer schools. They claim that the lack of respect for officials has contributed to violent acts in school.

But opponents argue that respect is more complicated than requiring **formal** titles for teachers. They claim respect grows from teachers and students working together, and that rules handed down by the government hurt this cooperation.

What do you think? Should students have to call their teachers Ma'am and Sir?

Yes By requiring students to speak with courtesy to their teachers, you'll have a better learning environment. And isn't that the goal of school anyway? Only when there is respect for teachers can kids learn anything. If no one respects the teachers, why would anyone listen to what they have to say? In addition, students who treat teachers with respect will learn to treat friends and future employers in the same manner.

No What kids don't need is a law telling them how to speak. What's next? A law telling them how to think? Forcing kids to use Ma'am and Sir doesn't create respect. It only drives kids and teachers farther apart, when they should be working as a team. That's where respect comes from. Students respect teachers they trust and who provide help.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: What's your opinion on this issue? Discuss your point of view with others in your class.

Debate Prompt 34

Should laws be stricter for teenage drivers?

Some people say that teen driving privileges should be restricted. Others say that teen drivers should have the same rights as everyone else. What do you think?

Picture this: It's your sixteenth birthday, and after years of waiting you're finally old enough to drive. But after studying hard and passing the driver's test, you find out that having a license isn't what you thought it would be. Your driving privileges are totally **restricted**. You can't drive alone at night, or with other teens. Basically, you discover that if you want to drive anywhere, you have to go with your mom!

Recently, teenagers around the country have been having a similar experience. They live in one of the 34 states that give teen drivers "graduated" licenses. With this type of license, you earn privileges **gradually**. In California, for example, for the first six months of having your license, you can't drive after midnight unless you have an adult in the car. And you're also not allowed to **transport** other teens.

Many people think graduated licenses are a good idea and that they'll save lives. Other people say that teens are being unfairly targeted. What do you think? Should states give teens graduated licenses?

Yes

Too many teens die on the road! Thirty-one percent of all deaths of people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four are caused by motor-vehicle accidents. Restricting teen driving privileges will reduce this. It might not be the most popular solution. But it's absolutely necessary. Kids just aren't mature enough to handle an adult license. The numbers prove it!

No

Why should teens be discriminated against? There are plenty of bad adult drivers out there. Why doesn't anyone restrict their licenses? Teens are being unfairly picked on, and their rights are definitely being violated. And graduated licenses will only cause problems for kids that have to work late.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: Are teen drivers more likely than older drivers to make mistakes? Are teen drivers more likely to break the law?

Debate Prompt 35

Should the paparazzi be banned?

Some people say the paparazzi should be banned. Others say that photographers should be free to take pictures of whatever they want. What do you think?

In recent years, a whole new generation of teen idols has hit the scene. People like Ricky Martin, Mandy Moore, and Justin Timberlake have all found fame and fortune in the world of movies and pop music. Their lives have become pretty exciting since they made it big. But there is also a price to fame. And among the most **annoying aspects** of celebrity are the paparazzi.

Paparazzi (pa-pa-ROT-zee) are photographers who make a living by selling pictures of celebrities. The better and rarer the picture, the more money they make. This is why paparazzi will follow certain celebrities everywhere. Most obey the laws. But some will sneak into celebrities' houses, stalk them on the beach, and even chase them in cars.

Many people think the paparazzi ought to be stopped. People say they violate celebrities' right to privacy, and are also dangerous.

The paparazzi say they're only giving people what they want. They also say that their work is what makes celebrities famous in the first place. What do you think? Should the paparazzi be banned?

Yes

Celebrities are people too! They have a right to privacy just like everyone else. The paparazzi violate this right and they should be stopped. It might be different if they weren't so **aggressive**. But they'll do really dangerous things to get the shots that sell for the most money. This is not about limiting freedom of speech. This is about stopping greed and respecting privacy. Ban the paparazzi!

No

The paparazzi are not at fault. They're only giving people what they want. Celebrities benefit from lots of press and the public loves the pictures. Anyway, there are already laws in place to protect celebrities from the aggressive paparazzi—it's already illegal to sneak into someone's house to take pictures of them. Why ban all paparazzi? Just go after the ones that break the law.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: How would you feel if someone took a picture of you after you asked them not to? Would you take a picture of a friend who told you not to?

Debate Prompt 36

Do teens have too much to do?

Some people say that teens have too much to do. Others suggest that busy schedules prepare teens for the real world. What do you think?

Here's a schedule you might recognize: Wake up at 5:30 A.M. Finish up homework. Go to school for six hours. Head to sports practice. Baby-sit or flip burgers until 8:00 P.M. Go home. Wolf down dinner. Practice piano. Do more homework. Hit the pillow at midnight.

Too much? Some people think so. Parents and teachers around the country are saying that schedules like this are way too full for young people. They say that without **sufficient** downtime a teen's physical and mental health can be seriously damaged.

But other people say a busy schedule is good for teens. They claim that keeping busy teaches teens about the real world and prepares them for the future. They also say that having lots of activities keeps teens out of trouble.

What do you think? Is it possible for teens to do too much?

Yes

This has nothing to do with laziness! This is about **priorities** and realistic expectations. Teens are so busy these days that they can't focus on the things that are really important—like being healthy and happy! Good grades are important. So are sports and part-time jobs. But teens still need time to relax and have fun, just like everyone else.

No

This is just another argument in defense of laziness. It's a hard world, and the sooner teens accept this, the better. The more they work now, the less difficult it will be for them to deal with the stressful world of adults. Life isn't going to get any easier. **Sheltering** teens from hard work won't help anything. People who think differently are fooling themselves.

Your Turn!

Write Now: *How much do you do? Write a paragraph describing your own schedule. Explain why you might want to add to or cut back on it.*

Debate Prompt 37

If you find a historical treasure, does it belong to you?

Some people say that sunken treasure belongs in museums. Others say that treasure belongs to the people who find it. What do you think?

How would you feel if you went scuba-diving and found **sunken** treasure—pieces of gold from a lost Spanish ship? Probably pretty excited. How would you feel if the coast guard made you turn the treasure over to a museum? You might feel kind of gypped. But you also might feel good. Everyone would be able to appreciate your discovery if it were in a museum.

But how would you feel if finding the treasure wasn't an accident? What if you were a professional treasure hunter? Many professional treasure hunters, or salvors, spend a lifetime looking for treasure that most people don't even believe exists. They study old books and maps for years. They go into **debt**. They even risk their lives. Now courts are making them give what they find to museums. The courts say that lost treasure is historically important and belongs to everyone.

What do you think? Should courts let salvors keep the lost treasure they find?

Yes Salvors do the work and take the risks. They should get the rewards! Most of the stuff they find would be lost forever if it weren't for them. If they can't keep the treasure they find, they'll stop looking. Anyway, when salvors sell their treasure, they auction it off to the highest bidder. If museums want the treasure, they can buy it just like anyone else.

No Treasure hunters need to be stopped! Historical **artifacts** belong to everyone and not just to the first guy who happens to find them. And museums are much too poor to buy the artifacts at an auction. Plus, treasure hunters do a lot of damage. They'll stop at nothing to get gold and silver. They often destroy historical sites and even the environment because of their greed.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: Imagine that you are a treasure hunter who has just found a valuable object off the U.S. coast. What would you say in a speech to congress?

Debate Prompt 38

Should surveillance cameras be used in schools?

Some schools are installing surveillance cameras to keep kids safe. But lots of people say this is a bad idea. What do you think?

These days, you can find **surveillance** cameras everywhere. They're at the mall, on street corners, and in libraries. Now, these cameras may be coming to the classrooms and hallways of your school. After the tragedy at Columbine High School in 1999, many schools across the country have been increasing security. And this has included placing surveillance cameras in school hallways, parking lots, and even on buses.

Administrators think the cameras will **reduce** theft, prevent violence, and identify suspects in crimes. They also say security cameras might even boost grades because students work best in safe environments.

Other people say that cameras violate kids' right to privacy. Furthermore, they claim that cameras are a waste of money. For a single school, **installing** a camera system can cost almost $1 million. Many people think this money would be better spent on educational material.

What do you think? Should surveillance cameras be used in public schools?

Yes

Schools can be dangerous places. School officials need to do whatever they can to keep students safe—even if this means giving up some freedoms. Surveillance cameras are the best way to catch criminals. Better still, they discourage people from committing crimes in the first place. Anyway, privacy is not really endangered. Tapes from cameras are usually not even watched unless a crime has occurred.

No

School safety is important. But it doesn't justify violating kids' rights. Besides, there are much better solutions than cameras. Why not take the money for a new surveillance system and start programs to help troubled kids. One million dollars could pay for job training and after-school activities. Catching troublemakers in the act doesn't solve anything. What kids need are reasons to not start trouble in the first place.

Your Turn!

Write Now: Imagine surveillance cameras are used in your school. Do students and teachers feel the same way about the cameras? Write a news story about student and teacher reaction to the cameras.

Debate Prompt 39

Should moshing be allowed at concerts?

Some say moshing at concerts is dangerous. Others say it's safe. What do you think?

You're at a concert. The place is **packed** and the music is loud. This is what you live for. You make your way to the front of the crowd. You know that the real action is by the stage. But when you arrive, everyone is just standing around. No one is bumping into one another. No one is crowd surfing or stage diving. And then you see the big line of security guards. At this concert, moshing is not allowed!

This is a **common** story these days. Many bands and concert promoters are saying no to moshing. Why? Because unruly concerts can be very dangerous. In the past five years, 49 people have died and nearly 22,000 people have been injured at concerts in the United States. The moshing fad explains a lot of the injuries.

But for many music fans, not being able to mosh takes the fun out of concerts. They also claim moshing isn't the problem and that it shouldn't be blamed when crowds get out of control.

What do you think? Should moshing be allowed at concerts?

Yes

No mosh, no fun. Going to a concert without moshing is like going to a restaurant without eating. Besides, moshing is not that dangerous. It's high-energy dancing. That's it. There's plenty of things that are much more **risky** than moshing. Like playing football. More kids get injured on a football field than in a mosh pit, but no one wants to ban football.

No

Moshers are obnoxious and really dangerous. They ruin concerts for everyone else. You can't get close to the stage without someone jumping on you or knocking you over. And moshing always leads to fights. Sooner or later, someone gets pushed too hard and they start punching. Anyway, it's not like moshing is the only way to enjoy a concert. There are plenty of ways to dance without hurting other people.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: *Would you be nervous at a concert where kids were moshing? Or would you join in? What might you do to protect yourself?*

Debate Prompt 40

Should school newspapers be censored?

In schools all across the county, teachers and principals regularly censor school newspapers. Do you think this is fair?

Picture this: You're working on a story for your school newspaper. You've done lots of research, conducted interviews, and dug up all the right information. After lots of careful analysis, you finally come up with **conclusive** proof: The cafeteria food is terrible! But just as you're about to publish your article, the principal steps in. He says you can't run the piece. Why? Because he thinks it makes the school look bad. Is this fair?

Many people say it is. They say school newspapers are different from real newspapers and that teachers have a responsibility to **supervise** them. The Supreme Court agrees. In 1988, it said, "A school need not tolerate student speech that is **inconsistent** with its basic educational mission."

Still, lots of people disagree with this. They say that censorship is always wrong, even in the case of a school newspaper.

What do you think? Should school officials censor school newspapers?

Yes Student journalists need guidance. They don't have enough experience to be in charge of a newspaper all by themselves. They could say things that are offensive or mean. Worse, they could write something that is false. If this happens and the story hurts someone, the school will be sued, not the reporter. School newspapers are just not the same as real newspapers.

No Principals and teachers have no right to censor school newspapers—one of the few places kids have to voice their opinions. If you censor the newspaper, you tell kids they have no right to express opinions. Anyway, the main reason schools censor their newspapers is because they have something to hide. With censorship, schools can do whatever they want. A free press holds people responsible for their actions.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: Why might some people want school papers censored? Why would others be against it?

Debate Prompt 41

Should paddling be used to punish students?

Lots of people say kids should be paddled if they step out of line. Others say this is wrong. What do you think?

Two students get into a bad fight at school. There's a broken nose, two knocked-out teeth, and a black eye. What should their punishment be? In some schools in the United States, the punishment would be a "good old-fashioned" spanking. Currently, 23 states allow school officials to paddle students. Some people **estimate** school officials paddle kids between 1 and 2 million times a year in U.S. schools.

Many people say this should stop. They say that paddling increases, rather than reduces, violence by teaching kids to use it to solve their problems. These people also say that paddling hurts a student emotionally. They say spanking can ruin students' self-**esteem** and turn teachers into enemies.

But other people think that paddling is the only way to teach students that their behavior has real consequences. They say paddling is far more frightening than detention.

What do you think? Should schools paddle students to punish them?

Yes

Paddling may be a tough punishment, but some students just won't listen. Paddling is the only way to get through to them. Suspending students doesn't work. It just gives them days off from school. Besides, kids are much better off in the long run if they get paddled. **Severe** punishment now means less trouble later in life.

No

Are you serious? Paddling is cruel and inhumane and should be totally illegal. It teaches students that violence is a good way to solve their problems. What else is paddling but a form of physical violence? Paddling is also completely embarrassing and damages the self-image of the student. Schools should have other forms of punishment. Paddling should be banned!

Your Turn!

Talk About It: What means of control, other than paddling, can teachers use in the classroom?

Debate Prompt 42

Would you give up certain luxuries to save the environment?

Cars and air conditioners cause pollution. Some people say we should give them up. Others say we shouldn't. What do you think?

Your dad is driving you crazy. It seems like he doesn't care about the environment at all. He doesn't **recycle**, he runs the air conditioner **continuously**, and he puts chemicals on the lawn. What's worse, he laughs when you tell him that these things harm the planet. Then one day he tells you he has a surprise. He says that he's bought you an early birthday present. It's a gorgeous, but gas-guzzling, sports car.

Do you accept it? You know that cars are a major source of pollution. And you know that it's important to conserve energy. Hello! We're talking about your very own car.

Whatever you decide, you can be sure that you're not the only one facing this problem. These days, everyone struggles with the fact that everyday products can damage the environment. But what's the solution? Should people have to give up things they want and need to save the environment?

Yes People think that their actions don't matter, but it all adds up. When millions of people run air conditioners and drive cars alone, it wastes energy and pollutes the air. The environment must come first. It doesn't matter what we have to give up. Anyway, what seems essential often isn't. For instance, people can take buses instead of driving. Or, they can wear lighter clothing instead of turning on the air conditioner.

No People should relax and stop being so **pessimistic**. Earth has been around for a long time. Cars and air conditioners aren't going to destroy it. Anyway, what some call comforts and conveniences are really necessities. Imagine living in Phoenix, Arizona, without an air conditioner, or in rural Nebraska without a car. Environmentalists should understand that there are some things people can't live without.

Your Turn!

Write Now: Make a list of the things you enjoy that might be harmful to the environment. Are there any you could use less—or stop using altogether?

Debate Prompt 43

Should students have to do volunteer work to graduate?

Some people think that passing all your classes is enough of a reason to graduate. What do you think?

Homework, sports, friends, chores, sometimes even a job—it's amazing that kids can fit it all in. Well, guess what? Some sudents have a new after-school responsibility—volunteer work.

One teen works at an old-age home. Another reads books to the blind. Other students volunteer at a homeless shelter. Are they doing it out of the goodness of their hearts? Not really. They have to do it if they want to graduate from school. Across the country, students are being **required** to do volunteer work to graduate.

Some parents and students think this is unfair. They say that teens already have enough to do. It's fine if teens want to volunteer, but they shouldn't be forced to do it. Others say it's good for teens to do volunteer work. Learning to help others is educational.

What do you think? Should doing volunteer work be a requirement to graduate?

Yes Volunteering is great! Every teen should become **involved**. When teens work in the community, they learn things they could never learn in the classroom. Working at a homeless shelter or reading to the blind teaches kids to appreciate the good things they have in life. It also teaches them **compassion**. Besides, what could be more important than helping other people? Volunteering is important—and it improves your life.

No Having to do volunteer work isn't volunteering at all. Volunteer work should not be a part of schoolwork. Many students don't have time to volunteer. They are too busy with homework and activities. There's plenty of time to volunteer once you're an adult. Besides, there are lots of kinds of volunteering. Many teens volunteer at home—babysitting, cooking, and cleaning. No forced volunteering!

Your Turn!

Write Now: Make a list of two to three places where you would like to be a volunteer. What kinds of things could you do if you volunteered at these places?

Debate Prompt 44

Should schools named for slave owners be renamed?

Many schools named after slave owners are changing their names. Do you think this is a good idea?

In the past five years, the school board in New Orleans has changed the names of 22 schools. Why? Because the board opposes schools that were named for anyone who did not respect equal rights for all.

The problem is that some of these schools were named for some pretty famous people. The list includes important war heroes and political leaders. George Washington was even on the list because he was a slave owner! So the New Orleans school board renamed George Washington Elementary for Dr. Charles Richard Drew, a famous African-American **surgeon**.

But some people think this is going too far. They agree schools shouldn't support things like slavery. But they also think that people like George Washington **deserve** to be remembered. After all, they say, he did make major contributions to our country.

How do you feel? Should all schools named for slave owners be renamed?

Yes

We should not **honor** anyone who owned a slave. If a school is named after a person who owned a slave, the name should be changed. It doesn't matter who it is. Naming schools after slave owners sends a terrible message to kids. It tells them that people today don't care about the pain that some of our American ancestors suffered in slavery.

No

No one's supporting slavery by naming a school after George Washington. He was a slave owner, and that was wrong. But he was also our first president and the leader of the American Revolution. That's what people are honoring when they name a school after him. Schools should teach kids about the horror of slavery in social studies classes. They shouldn't worry about changing school names.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: Why do you think some people may feel strongly about this issue? How do you feel about it? Share it with others in your class.

Debate Prompt 45

Should doctors transplant pigs' organs into human bodies?

Some people think doctors should use pigs' organs to save human lives. Others think this is a bad idea. What do you think?

Doctors can now save lives by **temporarily** transplanting pig organs into human bodies. Pigs' organs are similar in size and weight to human organs. That's why they **function** well in humans. Companies are now even cloning pigs for this purpose. The pig clones were developed for organs that are **compatible** with human bodies. Within the next year, there may even be a permanent pig-to-human organ transplant!

But some people say we shouldn't pursue these transplants. They fear the pigs' organs could introduce new diseases to humans. Many people also think that killing animals for their organs is a violation of animals' rights.

People in favor of the transplants say that the risks for disease are minimal. They also claim that animal rights are just not important when a human being is dying.

What do you think? Should doctors put pigs' organs in human bodies?

Yes This is a no-brainer! There are 180,000 people worldwide waiting for organ transplants. Many of these people will die waiting for an organ. If pig organs were used, many more lives would be saved. We can't let skeptics and animal rights advocates hold us back. Scientists should keep working hard to develop better transplanting procedures. It's a matter of life and death.

No Humans might get deadly viruses from pig-organ transplants. Some scientists think that diseases like Mad Cow Disease could come into the human population through contact with animals. Who knows what kinds of new diseases pigs could give us? Anyway, animals are not simply tools to be used and abused as humans see fit. They have rights too. Putting animals' organs in human bodies should not be allowed!

Your Turn!

Talk About It: If someone you know needed a transplant, how would you feel about the use of pigs' organs.

Debate Prompt 46

Should male and female training in the military be separate?

Some people think that men and women in the armed services should be trained separately. Others say they should be trained together. What do you think?

These days, more and more women are joining the military. There are nearly 200,000 women already enlisted. Women in the military can do almost anything, including flying combat planes. The only jobs women are **excluded** from are ground combat and submarine duty.

Even so, the issue of women in the military is far from settled. In the marines, men and women are separated during basic training. Recently, a panel **appointed** by Defense Secretary William S. Cohen **proposed** expanding this policy. The panel wants to separate men and women in the army, navy, and air force training programs as well.

Some people believe that separating men and women during training makes them better soldiers. They also say it reduces problems like sexual harassment. But other people say that separating men and women shows that women are not being treated equally.

What do you think? Should male and female military training be separate?

Yes

Face facts! Men and women are different. Separating them during basic training is a good idea. If men and women are separated, they won't become involved with each other romantically. And bigger problems like sexual harassment would be reduced to zero. With separate training, the military can focus on preparing recruits for battle rather than baby-sitting them.

No

We live in a society where men and women are equal. Separating men and women during basic training totally contradicts that. If they don't train together, how will men and women learn to work together? Segregating men and women would be a definite step backwards. Besides, hasn't our nation already learned that separate is not equal?

Your Turn!

Write Now: *Why does separate training make sense? Why might it not be a good idea?*

Debate Prompt 47

Should girls have their own schools?

Some people say girls should have their own schools. Others say they ought to be educated with boys. What do you think?

These days, people are still working hard to make sure men and women are treated equally. It's true that the United States has laws to protect that equality. But sometimes those laws aren't enough. This is especially true in American schools. A 1992 study showed that schools consistently shortchange girls. Girls are less active in school politics than boys. They participate in sports less than boys do. And they achieve less in school.

But in some parts of the United States, the opposite is true. In several public schools, the class president, the captain of the soccer team, and even the editor of the yearbook are all girls. How did this happen? After the 1992 study, several states started all-girls schools.

Supporters of these schools say this type of environment works. They say these schools ensure that girls have plenty of **opportunities**. **Opponents** say that all-girls schools give a false **impression** of what the real world is like.

What do you think? Should girls have their own schools?

Yes All-girls schools are a great idea. There's scientific proof that teachers pay more attention to boys than to girls. With no boys around, girls get the attention they deserve. And it's easier for them to participate in school activities. Plus, in single-sex schools girls are free from social pressures and can concentrate on learning.

No This is a rotten idea. It's true that girls aren't always treated fairly. And that has to change. But sexism is not going to go away just by having all-girls schools. Girls should be exposed to the pressures they will face in the real world. That's the only way they'll learn to deal with challenges. If girls don't go to school with boys, they're not going to be prepared for real life when they graduate.

Your Turn!

Find Out More: Take a poll in your class. How many are in favor? How many are against?

Debate Prompt 48

Should kids learn riflery in schools?

Some people say guns have no place at schools. Others say that riflery should be treated like any other sport. What do you think?

Across the country, schools are **beefing up** their security. They want to make sure that no one's bringing anything dangerous to school—especially guns.

But some schools in the United States actually own guns, and keep them in their buildings. What's more, they let students use them! How come? Believe it or not, many schools have riflery teams. The teams learn to use the guns at school, and practice shooting rifles on school grounds.

For some teams, however, shooting practice is over for good. Many of the schools that have riflery are now banning it. People like Chicago Schools Chief Paul Vallas say that riflery sends a **mixed message** to kids. Schools tell kids that gun violence is wrong, but then schools teach kids how to shoot.

Other people think it's unfair to ban a safe sport that many kids enjoy. They say riflery should be treated like any other activity.

What do you think? Should schools ban rifle teams?

Yes

Guns have no place at school! It doesn't matter what they're for. You can't teach kids not to play with guns one day, and then let them use them the next. And what if a dangerous person signs up for riflery? Is it a good idea to teach this person how to use a gun? Riflery can't be treated like "any other sport." What makes it different? Hello! It involves dangerous weapons!

No

The right to **bear** arms is protected by the constitution. No one has the power to violate that right. It's that simple. Anyway, the problem of violence doesn't have anything to do with guns. It has to do with kids who have serious mental problems. People should spend more time addressing the needs of kids rather than trying to ban a healthy and exciting activity.

Your Turn!

Write Now: Write a paragraph that explains your feelings about riflery.

Debate Prompt 49

Should the United States be the world's police force?

Some people say the United States should help other nations. Others say that the world's problems are none of our business. What do you think?

Let's say you have a friend in a far-off country. One day she sends you a letter that says she can't write to you anymore. At first you don't understand. But as you continue to read, you discover the reason. A war has broken out in her country.

This is the worst news you've ever received. You're worried for your friend. You start watching the news every night to see what's happening. It's the most **horrifying** thing you've ever seen. Then one day the news reports something completely unbelievable. The United States has decided not to help stop the war. The government says it's none of our business. How do you feel?

Many people would argue this decision makes sense. These people say that the United States just can't solve everyone else's problems. Others say the United States must help those in need, no matter what. They say we just can't **abandon** people.

What do you think? Should the United States be the world's police force?

Yes

People need our help. All you have to do is turn on the television to see people who are starving or getting shot at. The United States is the richest country in the world. It has more money and a bigger military than any other country. There are all sorts of things we can do to solve the world's problems. To sit back and do nothing is **unthinkable**.

No

We can't even solve our own problems. How can we help other people? Our country needs new schools, new hospitals, and a bigger police force. We can't pour money into other countries until we've taken care of these things first. Anyway, the world has too many problems to solve. If we tried to fix everyone else's problems we'd be broke in a week.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: Why might some countries need help from the United States?

Debate Prompt 50

Should teens have their own credit cards?

Some say credit cards are just for adults. Others think that kids should get them too. What do you think?

Let's say you really want a new portable CD player but you don't quite have the cash. Here's the good news: Someone agrees to lend you the money. But there's a catch. You have to pay them back extra. And the longer you take to pay them back, the more you'll owe. You could even end up owing double what you borrowed! Would you take the loan? Believe it or not, teens all across America are getting loans just like this. How? That's how credit cards work!

Credit cards can be useful. If you don't have the money for something you need, you can buy it anyway. You'll just pay for it later. But this **convenience** has a price. If you plan to buy now and pay later, you'll be paying very high interest. That means you'll be paying extra for anything you buy.

Many people think credit cards are too much responsibility for teens. Others think that they should have the same rights as any other **consumer**.

What do you think? Should teens be allowed to have their own credit cards?

Yes Credit cards let you do all sorts of things. They make it easy to buy things over the phone. If they get lost or stolen, they're easier to **replace** than cash. Plus, a credit card keeps track of your spending—it's a good way to stay on budget. And if you're careful, you'll never have to pay interest. Credit cards are useful in today's world and teens should have them too.

No It's hard enough for adults to keep track of their credit card. Many adults get in big trouble with their credit-card debts. It would only be worse for teens. Most kids don't make enough money to pay back their debt on time. Teach kids about savings and buying things with the money they have—not the money they're going to have.

Your Turn!

Write Now: Make a list of good reasons for teens to have credit cards. Make a second list of reasons why it is a bad idea.